

# The Nation

Together Again

## With Bush in the Oval Office, Is The C.I.A. 'Back in the Saddle'?

By STEPHEN ENGELBERG

**V**ICE PRESIDENT BUSH, who will be the first President to have served as America's intelligence chief, wasted no time in signaling a new, hands-on approach to intelligence issues.

At his post-election news conference, Mr. Bush said that he would receive his daily intelligence briefing from the Central Intelligence Agency, a departure from the practice of Presidents Reagan, Carter and Nixon, who relied on their national security advisers to digest and present the information.

In a city in which powerful figures fight over seat assignments on Government trips, the issue of who delivers the news — good and bad — to the President is of real significance. In most recent administrations, the national security adviser, Secretary of State and, to a lesser degree, the Director of Central Intelligence have jockeyed for influence over the shaping of foreign policy.

Mr. Bush, when he served as Director of Central Intelligence under President Ford, understood that his power to mold policy rose and fell with his access to the President. So some in Washington see his announcement on the morning briefings as a notable portent.

"This is a major change," said a former C.I.A. official. "It says that Bush wants a very close and direct relationship with the agency, without any filters in between. It says something about the role of intelligence and the degree to which the C.I.A., not the other intelligence agencies, is going to be a major influence on policy development. It says to me that the agency is back in the saddle."

During the Nixon Administration, Henry Kissinger, as national security adviser, kept the Director of Central Intelligence, Richard Helms, at arm's length from the White House. Similarly, Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's national security adviser, said he made sure from the first day of the Carter term that he controlled the morning briefing. Mr. Brzezinski said he resisted

attempts by Stansfield Turner, the head of the C.I.A., to be involved in the sessions.

"I felt that if the briefing is going to be not just strictly intelligence, and deal with the whole gamut of national security issues, it ought to be by the national security adviser," he said.

Mr. Turner said he does not recall the briefing contretemps. But he agreed that a tension existed between himself and Mr. Brzezinski over who should be giving the President intelligence information.

"I did worry that the security adviser would take a piece of raw intelligence and send it in to the President out of context," Mr. Turner said.

As Vice President, Mr. Bush was briefed by the C.I.A. each morning and then usually attended the

national security briefing for Mr. Reagan that was run by the national security adviser. The meeting was used by John M. Poindexter, one of Mr. Reagan's security advisers, to discuss the Iran arms dealings and other highly sensitive matters.

It is still unclear what role the C.I.A. will play in the Bush Administration. Mr. Bush was head of the agency for less than a year, succeeding William E. Colby, and he is remembered by C.I.A. veterans, like Henry Knoche, his deputy at the agency, for his easy-going style and deference to the judgments of the professional staff.

Mr. Bush was in charge in 1976, when the agency was still reeling from the Church Committee investigations of C.I.A. abuses such as assassination plots, and his role was largely to rebuild relations with Congress. "We were in a hunker-down mode," Mr. Knoche said.

Said a C.I.A. official who was an aide to Mr. Bush at the time: "His main concern was protecting the organization on the Hill, and that he did. He spent 80 percent of his effort fighting fires on Capitol Hill."

In the past, the power of the C.I.A. relative to other agencies has largely depended on the personal relationship between the director and the President.

For much of the Reagan Administration, the C.I.A. enjoyed an enhanced position through the personality and vigor of its Director, William J. Casey. While Mr. Reagan received his morning briefing from a succession of national security advisers, Mr. Casey deftly used his friendship with the President and his seat in the Cabinet to assure that his agency played a central role. He also favored an active role for covert operations.

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After the Iran-contra affair and Mr. Casey's death, Mr. Reagan appointed William H. Webster as Director of Central Intelligence. Like other Administration officials, he was asked by President Reagan to resign last week. In any case, there was little enthusiasm in the Bush camp for keeping Mr. Webster, who previously headed the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

A report by a Washington study group, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, called on Mr. Bush to keep Mr. Webster, at least temporarily, so as to make the post appear less subject to the winds of politics. In theory, the Vice President might have been sympathetic to this view, since he had hopes of staying on as head of the agency after Jimmy Carter defeated President Ford in 1976. But Mr. Bush appears to be leaning toward a change at C.I.A.

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